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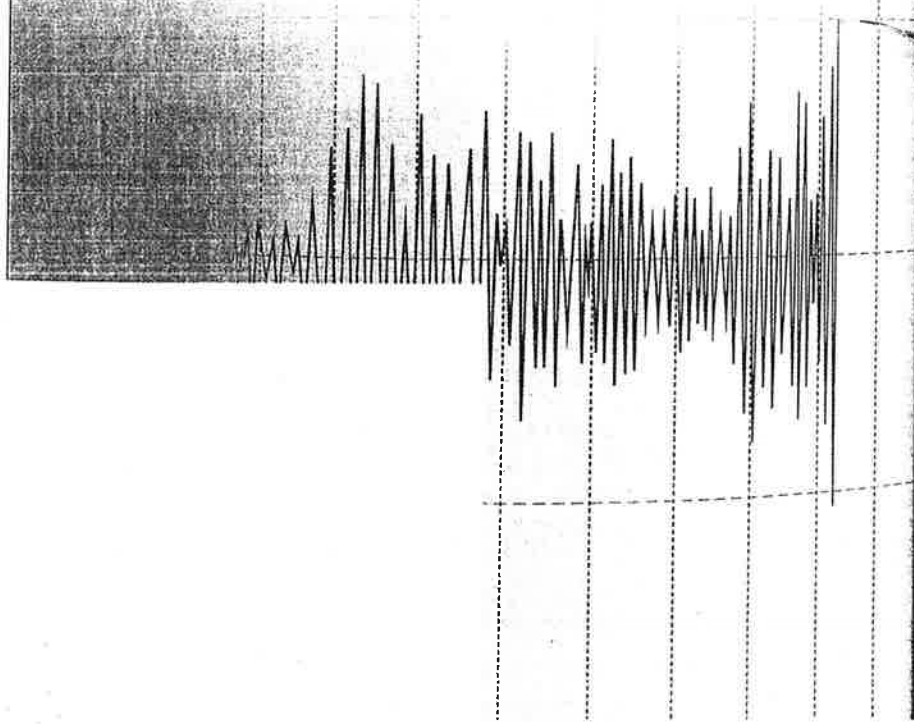
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EXCLUSIVE SURVEY

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EHRs: THE REAL STORY

Why a national outcry from physicians will shake the health information technology sector

by DANIEL R. VERDON *Group Content Director*

Despite the government's bribe of nearly \$27 billion to digitize patient records, nearly 70% of physicians say electronic health record (EHR) systems have not been worth it. It's a sobering statistic backed by newly released data from marketing and research firm MPI Group and *Medical Economics* that suggest nearly two-thirds of doctors would not purchase their current EHR system again because of poor functionality and high costs. (See Tables 1-2.)

HIGHLIGHTS

01 Nearly four out of five doctors in practices with 10 or more physicians said that their EHR investment was not worth the time, effort, and cost.

02 Close to three out of four of large practices would not purchase their current EHR system, while two-thirds of respondents are dissatisfied with the functionality of their EHR systems.

▶▶ IN A SURPRISE FINDING, nearly 45% of physicians from the national survey report spending more than \$100,000 on an EHR. About 77% of the largest practices spent nearly \$200,000 on their systems. (See Table 3)

While physicians can receive \$44,000 through the Medicare EHR Meaningful Use (MU) incentive program, and \$63,750 through Medicaid's MU program, some physicians say it's not nearly enough to cover the increasing costs of implementation, training, annual licensing fees, hardware and associated services. But the most dramatic unanticipated

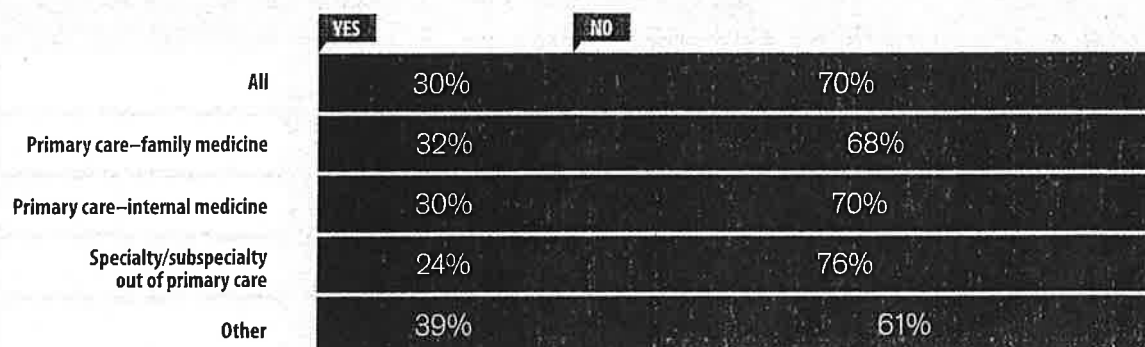
costs were associated with the need to increase staff, coupled with a loss in physician productivity.

"We used to see 32 patients a day with one tech, and now we struggle to see 24 patients a day with four techs. And we provide worse care," said one survey respondent.

While some physicians cited benefits of accessing patient data, availability of practice metrics, and e-prescribing conveniences for patients, most physicians do not believe these systems come close to creating new efficiencies or sharing data with multiple providers or improving patient care.

70% say EHRs not worth it

Q: Has your EHR investment been worth the effort, resources, and costs?

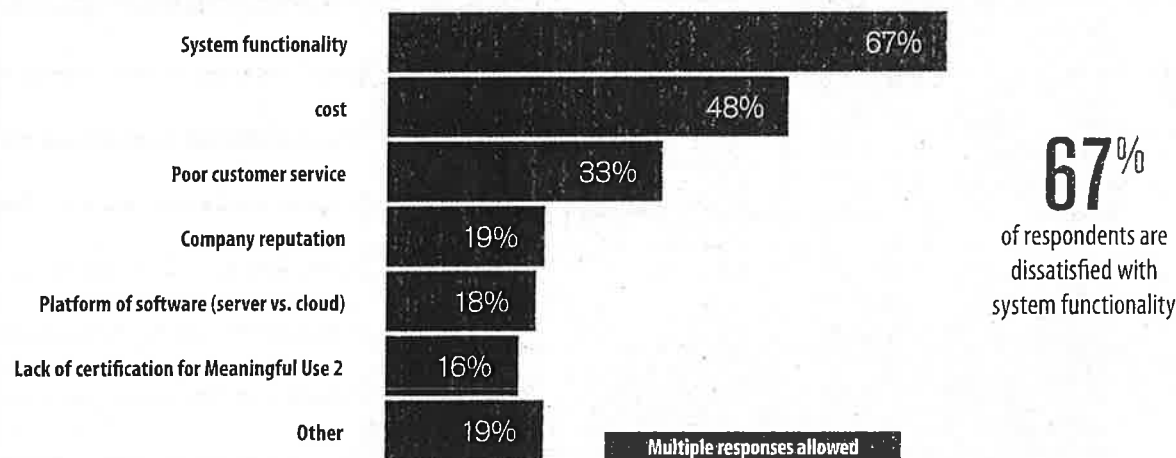


Source: 2014 Exclusive EHR Study Survey; MPI Group, Medical Economics

N=952

Practices dislike EHR functionality and cost

Q: If you are planning to switch EHR systems, which factors are influencing your decision?



Source: 2014 Exclusive EHR Study Survey; MPI Group/Medical Economics

N=606

In fact, when doctors were asked if their EHR investment was worth the effort, resources and cost, “no” was the reply given by nearly 79% of respondents in practices with more than 10 physicians. (See Table 1)

Medical Economics’ survey results, based on responses from nearly 1,000 physicians, were corroborated by the findings of a

January 2013 RAND Corp. study, detailed in *Health Affairs*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and other national media organizations, criticizing the usability and interconnectedness of current EHR systems.

“The failure of health information technology to quickly deliver on its promise is not caused by its lack of potential, but rather be-

EHR Best Practices

The 2-year *Medical Economics* EHR Best Practices Study showcased a bevy of useful and practical solutions developed by physicians themselves as they worked through the various phases of an EHR implementation—from training, and system set-up to go-live and achievement of Meaningful Use. (See the full story on p. 32.)

cause of the shortcomings in the design of the IT systems that are currently in place,” says Art Kellermann, MD, MPH, the study’s senior author and the Paul O’Neill Alcoa Chair in Policy Analysis at RAND.

Another 2013 RAND report, titled “Physician Professional Satisfaction and their Implications for Patient Care,” concludes that frustrations related to EHRs are negatively influencing physician attitudes about their careers.

“Poor EHR usability, time-consuming data entry, interference with face-to-face patient care, inefficient and less fulfilling work content, inability to exchange health information between EHR products, and degradation of clinical documentation were prominent sources of professional dissatisfaction,” the report says.

The most recent data from MPI Group and *Medical Economics* not only corroborates these physician sentiments related to EHRs, but calls on software developers to build solutions that help physicians improve patient care, not obstruct it.

CLOSER LOOK AT THE RESULTS

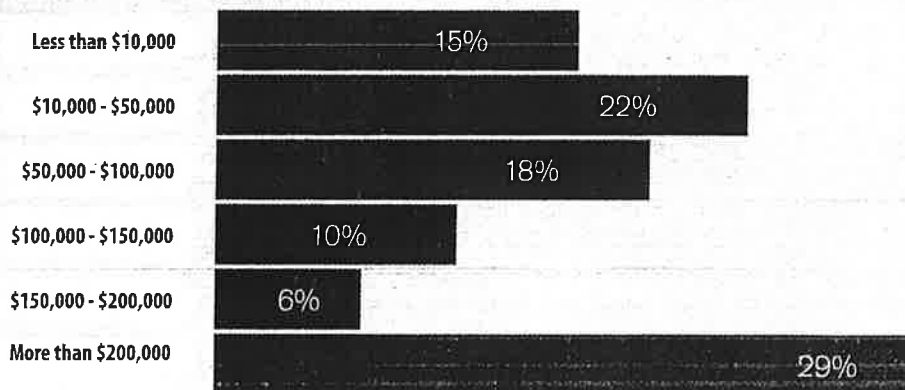
Here are other key findings from the national survey:

- ☒ 73% of the largest practices would not purchase their current EHR system. The data show that 66% of internal medicine specialists would not purchase their current system. About 60% of respondents in family medicine would also make another EHR choice.
- ☒ 67% of physicians dislike the functionality of their EHR systems.
- ☒ Nearly half of physicians believe the cost of these systems is too high.
- ☒ 45% of respondents say patient care is worse since implementing an EHR. Nearly 23% of internists say patient care is significantly worse.
- ☒ 65% of respondents say their EHR systems result in financial losses for the practice. About 43% of internists and other specialists/subspecialists outside of primary care characterized the losses as significant.
- ☒ About 69% of respondents said that coordination of care with hospitals has not improved.
- ☒ Nearly 38% of respondents doubt their system will be viable in five years.
- ☒ 74% of respondents believe their vendors will be in business over the next 5 years.

→ 27

TABLE 3 EHR implementations have been costly

Q: How much have you invested today in your EHR system, including hardware, software, training, consulting, etc.?



45%
spent more than \$100,00 on EHR

77%
largest practices spent more than \$200,000

Source: 2014 Exclusive EHR Study Survey; MPI Group/Medical Economics

N=925

TABLE 4 Impact on patient care

Q: To what extent has your EHR system improved the quality of patient care?*

	Significant improved	Somewhat improved	No change	somewhat worse	Significant worse
All	11%	24%	20%	26%	19%
Primary care - family medicine	14%	24%	18%	29%	16%
Primary care - internal medicine	13%	23%	16%	24%	23%
Specialty/subspecialty outside of primary care	8%	21%	22%	27%	22%
Other	12%	33%	22%	20%	13%

45%

of respondents indicate patient care is worse

■ Significant improved ■ Somewhat improved ■ No change ■ somewhat worse ■ Significant worse

Source: 2014 Exclusive EHR Study Survey; MPI Group/Medical Economics

* Categories may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

N=959

About the survey

Medical Economics' State of EHR Survey was conducted by the research firm The MPI Group and used an online questionnaire. There were 967 total respondents, with surveys received in November and December 2013. Respondents answers to the survey are either anonymous (no contact information provided) or confidential (contact information provided and the respondent willing to discuss the survey with *Medical Economics*.) The margin of error for most questions on the survey is approximately $\pm 3.2\%$ at a confidence level of 95%.

About MPI Group, Inc.

The MPI Group offers thought leadership and research, that help create insight, understanding, affinity, and market awareness. Based in Shaker Heights, OH, MPI also maintains one of the world's largest databases of detailed financial, operational, and strategic performance metrics collected from thousands of facilities and firms around the globe. For more information, go to mpi-group.com.

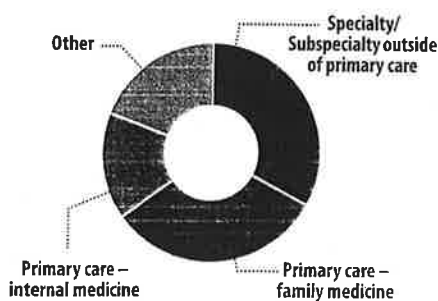
About Medical Economics

Medical Economics is the leading business media brand for physicians in the United States. *Medical Economics* engages physicians 945,000 times every month in print, in digital editions, online, e-newsletters and through our iPad app.

Survey respondents

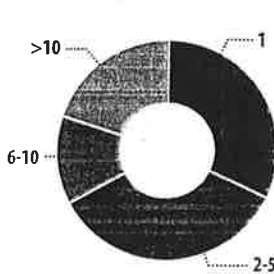
Practice description

(N=967)



Number of physicians

(N=967)



Participant title

(N=967)

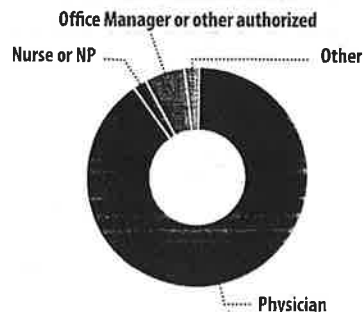
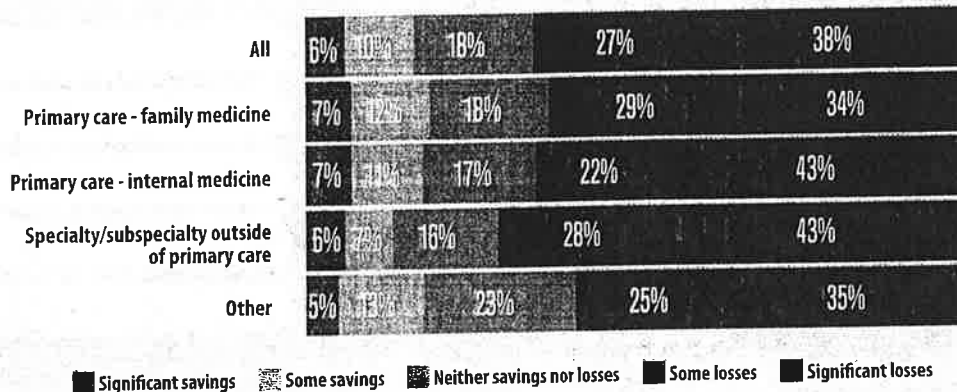


TABLE 5 EHR systems and financial losses

Q: To what extent has your EHR system saved you money?



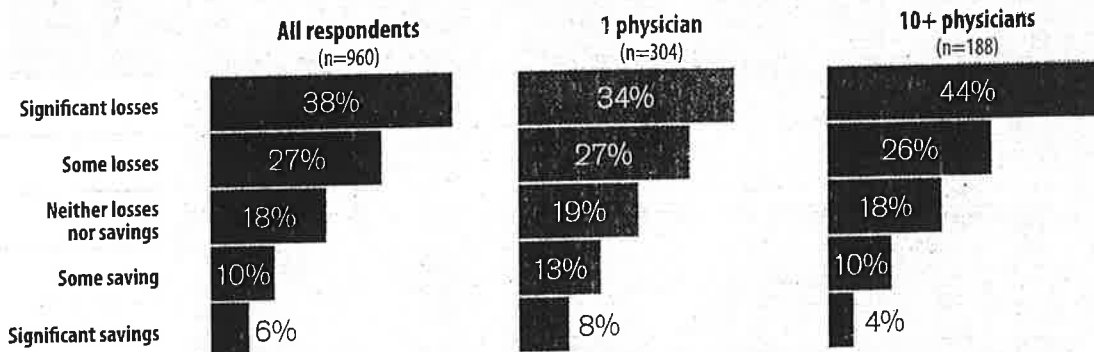
65%
of respondents indicate systems result in financial losses

Source: 2014 Exclusive EHR Study Survey; MPI Group/Medical Economics

N=960

TABLE 6 The escalating costs associated with EHRs

Q: To what extent has your EHR system saved you money?*



Source: 2014 Exclusive EHR Study Survey; MPI Group/Medical Economics * Categories may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

→ 20 MAJOR DISCONNECT

The *Medical Economics* survey was conducted to gauge physician attitudes about EHRs and benchmark data gathered during a separate and novel 2-year EHR Best Practices Study of 29 U.S. physicians in independent practices (nearly all were in solo practice).

While this 2-year study concluded at the end of 2013, some of the same physician attitudes and frustrations related to the implementation and use of EHRs were doc-

umented in the national survey. Common frustrations cited by physicians in both projects included a decrease in patient visits, reports of efficiency declines, and unanticipated costs associated with implementing and using EHR systems. (See conclusions of the 2-year *Medical Economics* EHR Best Practices Study on p. 32.)

The national survey underscores the major disconnect between the current state of EHR software and the needs of physicians. ❑